

**Woodstock Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
October 27, 2014
7:30 p.m., Meeting Room A, Woodstock Town Hall**

Members Present: J. Kaeding, J. Pillo, P. Garrison, E. Zimmerman Smith, R. Wilmot

Absent: C. Adams, G. Jacobson, M. Robie, L. Wesler, W. Loftus

- 1. Meeting called to order at 7:33 p.m.**
- 2. Seating of alternates:** None.
- 3. Approval/amendment of minutes:** Minutes of September meeting approved by Pillo, seconded by Kaeding, with one correction (spelling of Phragmites)
- 4. Treasurer's Report:** None.
- 5. Public Participation:** None.
- 6. Communications:**
 - a) Arcnews
 - b) The Habitat
 - c) Ag evening with UCONN Dean of Ag Greg Weidemann
 - d) Letter from CT licensed Forester Mike Bartlett concerning harvesting practices on Town land.
- 7. Old business:**
 - a) Development Review Committee Report
 - b) OSLA & APC Report
 - c) P & Z Report
- 8. New Business:**
 - a) *Planned timber harvest on Town owned land.*
 - The Woodstock Conservation Commission (CC) is charged with supervising natural resources on Town-owned land. The CC learned of a planned timber harvest on Town-owned land through an article in the Woodstock Villager. We concerned, as we do not believe the current timber harvest plan is consistent with the Town's conservation goals. This was discussed at the last meeting, and a letter with recommendations was sent to the Board of Selectman (BOS.) No response was

received. A meeting was also requested by the CC. Kaeding plans to attend the next BOS meeting to discuss the CC's concerns.

- The BOS intends to proceed with the harvest. Trees have already been marked. A special Town meeting will be held before the harvest.
- The last harvest (which took place after the 1999 Forest Management Plan [FMP] was developed) focused on timber stand improvement, and also generated income. The emphasis now seems to be solely on generating income.
- The project is apparently not going out to competitive bid.
- The Town did not have an up-to-date FMP prepared for this property. There is no current inventory of natural resources on the site (including stonewalls, foundations, wildlife, etc.)
- In order to have a sustainable and environmentally responsible timber harvest, an up-to-date FMP needs to be prepared **prior** to any kind of timber marking or sale, and it should be reviewed by a certified forester. Yale University students could prepare a plan at no cost. (The contact is Jennifer Hoyle.) Licensed Forester Russell Wilmot is a CC member. He manages 25,000 acres of forestland, and volunteered to review an FMP when generated.
- The planned approach to the timber harvest is not environmentally sustainable. They plan to harvest all valuable timber over 20 inches diameter base height (dbh.) This approach is commonly called a diameter limit cut or "high grade." High grading involves "taking the best and leaving the rest." It is the opposite of timber stand improvement. It would leave the forest with the slowest growing trees. Often these leftover trees are defective or diseased. These genetically inferior trees will then reproduce, which will negatively impact the residents of Woodstock for decades to come, as the future timber sales on this lot will never reach the land's full potential. This means that the Townspeople will forfeit future income.
- A proper FMP will ensure implementation of environmentally responsible practices that are consistent with Town's long term objectives for conservation. Wilmot noted that the money that the Town can or will receive from one harvest should not be the deciding factor in how to manage land. The income generated should be a byproduct of responsible land management.
- Pillo moved, Zimmerman Smith seconded and the following motion was approved unanimously by the CC: **The Conservation Commission strongly advises the Town not to proceed with any timber harvest on Town-owned land without an up-to-date Forest Management Plan (FMP) that includes an environmentally responsible, socially acceptable, economically profitable approach to a sustainable harvest, consistent with A Plan of Open Space and Conservation (accepted on June 20, 2001) The plan should be reviewed by a certified forester. (As noted above, Wilmott volunteered.) The FMP needs to specifically outline the Town's conservation goals for the property, and provide a complete inventory of**

the land that includes tree species, size, and quantity distribution throughout the property (i.e., the number and species of saplings, poles, and saw logs.). This way the Town will know what is and is not growing on the property. Also, existing invasive species should be mapped and managed as part of a timber sale. This will help ensure they do not spread when openings are made in the forest canopy.

b) *Town Land at Muddy Pond:*

Kaeding will follow up with Alan Kelly about the hiking trails. Pillo noted that the Town put “sterile” carp in the pond in an attempt to control milfoil.

c) Open discussion:

1. *Roseland Park and Lake:*

- The new Roseland Park caretakers are working on activities like adding a dock and making sailboats available for people to use. They will be holding fundraisers.
- Smith and Town resident Lisa Davidson attended the Invasive Plant conference at UCONN along with Jacobsen, Robie and Garrison. Smith learned that free signs about managing aquatic invasives are available from the CT DEEP and provided that information to the Park caretakers.
- Smith has set up a volunteer website to raise awareness about conservation and water quality at Roseland Lake. The address is www.RoselandLake.org.

2. Smith also set up a new webpage on the WCC site on Woodstock Farmland Soils at <http://www.woodstockconservation.org/farmlandsoils.htm>.

3. The “Beeches” area needs a sign directing people to the walking trail. The cost for a weatherproof, vandal-resistant sign by Fossil Inc would be about \$400.00. Kaeding will contact WBA to see if they would be interested in sponsoring the sign.

4. CACIWC 37th annual meeting is November 15th. Online registration is available.

8:50 p.m. Motion to adjourn.

Note: These minutes have not yet been approved by the Conservation Commission. Please refer to minutes from the next meeting for approval/amendments.

Respectfully submitted by WCC Member R. Wilmot